



South Carolina DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

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Free Program Helps SC Agribusiness Entrepreneurs Develop Business Skills

COLUMBIA – The South Carolina Department of Agriculture’s [Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship](#) (ACRE), in partnership with Clemson Cooperative Extension, is now accepting applications for the fourth annual curriculum program for agribusiness innovators throughout South Carolina.

If selected, these entrepreneurs will gain knowledge and insights to help develop their business and marketing plans.

The curriculum is taught by Clemson agribusiness faculty and spans five two-hour virtual courses and a sixth in-person session in Columbia. Participants will have the opportunity to pitch their business plan to a panel of judges for the chance to be awarded one of five \$5,000 grants.

Applications are due Sept. 14 and can be found at acre-sc.com under Programs. Qualifying applicants must be South Carolina residents and have an agribusiness idea or product prototype. Priority is given to applicants from rural counties or agribusinesses that would positively impact rural counties. Individuals selected for the curriculum program must attend virtual class sessions on Oct. 7, Oct. 14, Oct. 21, Oct. 28, and Nov. 4, as well as the in-person pitch day on Dec. 9. This is a free but competitive program – spots are limited.

The agribusiness curriculum program is one of two annual programs offered by ACRE. The Advanced Program, for established agribusiness entrepreneurs, awarded seven South Carolina agribusinesses a share of \$150,000 of funding earlier this year.

“Our goal for the fall curriculum is to educate emerging agribusinesses on running a business in South Carolina and set them up for success,” says Kyle Player, ACRE’s executive director. “It’s not uncommon for these individuals to gain the necessary skills through our planning curriculum and put them to good use and apply for our Advanced Entrepreneurship Program in the spring.”

That’s what happened for Tom Knaust, owner of Queen & Comb, who completed the curriculum in 2020 and received an Advanced Program award earlier this year.

“Going through the fall curriculum and writing a business plan helped me wrap my head around my numbers and understand which parts of my business are profitable and worth growing and pursuing,” said Knaust.

For more information, contact Kyle Player, ACRE Executive Director, 803-734-2324 or kplayer@scda.sc.gov; or Nathan Smith, Clemson Agribusiness Program Team Leader, 803-788-5700 or nathan5@clemson.edu.

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